

THE CALL OF THE CROSS

 GEORGE D. HERRON



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The call of the cross

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THE CALL OF THE CROSS

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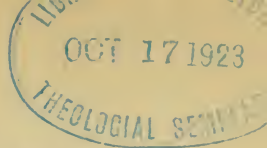
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THE CALL OF THE CROSS

FOUR COLLEGE SERMONS

BY

✓
REV. GEORGE D. HERRON, D. D.

Introduction by President George A. Gates

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TO MY FRIEND,
CARRIE RAND,
AN ELECT LADY,
I DEDICATE THIS CALL OF THE CROSS.



INTRODUCTION

All truth that has vitalizing power comes home to men in visions. The visions may be of the head or heart. Through whatever tributary the waters first are seen to be flowing they must all merge in the main current of experience, or the vision is no real vision but some cheap fancy, such "stuff as dreams are made of." The contents of this little volume are a real vision. The author is distinctively a seer. The one vision under which may be classified all the others is a divine-human life, real to thought, actual in living, realized already in part, to be perfected in a kingdom of God on earth, ON EARTH, *nota bene*.

Christianity is more than any church or all churches, more than any and all creeds. Christ has not come into the world to establish salvation by the ark theory of separating a few from an inevitable general wreck. Christ has come to redeem humanity. That redemption

is established; but redemption is essentially a process. Consequently, the completion must be wrought out through the ages of humanity's development. The Hebrew root from which is derived the word Pharisee is a verb signifying to separate. That is the spirit of Pharisaism. "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate," is fatal or vital according to whether the injunction be considered as a means or an end. The original Pharisees mistook it as an end. They brought upon their heads the accumulated woes from the lips of Jesus. He taught and lived and died for the exact reverse of that spirit of Pharisaism. The only separatism that true Christianity knows is a withdrawal in order to gain an accumulation of power for service. Christianity is not separation but permeation.

The church is not to withdraw itself into an organization gathered out of the world; it is to pour itself in the consecrated sacrifice of service into the world. The two disciples who were on the mount with Jesus wanted to take advantage of their opportunity to make a little private high church establishment and suggested that they abide there. The lower

section of Raphael's great picture of the Transfiguration has immortalized in art their rebuke.

The author of this book is an optimist. The writer of this Introduction heard a man say, "He is a pessimist; he thinks the world is going to the devil and the church going along with it." On the contrary, he thinks the world is going to God. It is going to accelerate its speed thither immeasurably in the near future. Humanity is going thither, whether *via the church*, or *a church*, or without any church—that is, by some new and different organization of the divine life. Till the Almighty abdicates the throne of the universe there is no mission for the pessimist. The author believes in the divine development of the human race with all the passion of a Hegelian. He believes in the cross as the symbol of the method of that development with all the intensity of the most strenuous evangelical. The contents of this volume are not visionary except in the sense already indicated. The author is no church-steeple dreamer; he is a practical preacher and evangelizer. The most successful evangelist of our

modern days begins always with the church. First let the church be born again, reconverted, then the church may pour itself upon the community.

Two of these sermons were preached before the students of Iowa College in connection with the day of prayer for colleges. It is pleasant to testify to their evangelistic power as determined by that practical test. No test is more practical. A body of college students is somewhat unconventional and entirely frank in the response to what comes before them. The combination in these sermons of strong intellectuality with, if possible, yet more profound spiritual experience, is precisely adapted to effectiveness before college students. These sermons lift up Christ in order that he may draw all men unto him.

The appeals of the elements of the gospel here emphasized address themselves to the heroic in young men and women. Therein consists their power. There is very little real and abiding help for the young in anything which falls short of calling for their heroism. To tell them that they need Christ to save them will many times help as nothing else

can. But there is a profounder impulse than that; there is a higher motive than seeking one's personal safety here or anywhere, now or any when. That higher motive is a call to sacrifice. Sacrifice at its best is a sacrifice of consecration to service. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, sang the old Roman poet. Though no poet ever sang it, it is true that it is sweeter and more beautiful to live for one's country. Ay, and infinitely harder. The sacrifice of use is an immeasurably severer test of character than the sacrifice of renunciation. It is just that appeal to the great sacrifice of use and service that stirs the hearts of young men and women as no other appeal can do it. The gospel must be seen to be not a philosophic speculation, but a real life which can enter into men and women and send them out consumed with the fire of a Christian consecration. The most glorious call that ever sounds in the souls of them who have ears to hear, is when the voice of God calls, as he calls every one: "Come; I want you to help me to help men."

This little book contains such an appeal. It must do good among those in whom is the

best hope of the future of our race, the students in our institutions of higher learning.

Iowa College, GEORGE A. GATES.
Grinnell, Iowa.

* "The Call of the Cross" and "The Divine Method of Culture" were preached at the 1892 commencement of Tabor College, Iowa.

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I .

The Call of the Cross

I do not believe the world is dying for new ideas. A teacher has a high place amongst us, but some one is wanted here and abroad far more than a teacher. It is power we need, power that shall help us to solve our practical problems, power that shall help us to realize a high, individual, spiritual life, power that shall make us daring enough to act out all we have seen in vision, all we have learnt in principle from Jesus Christ. . . . And I do trust that, among all the teachings of our churches, there will be a clear and forceful exposition of the wider aspects of Christian citizenship and responsibility, and that we shall never again, if ever our fathers did in the past, sink back into that exclusive individualism which thinks so much and strives so much to forget that personal salvation is only the beginning of a renewed individualism through which societies and nations, and at last the world, shall be overtaken for Jesus Christ. —*Rev. Charles A. Berry.*

I

The Call of the Cross

Arise, let us go hence.—*John* xiv: 31.

Our Lord by these words is not bidding the apostles go with him from the room where they have been eating the parting supper. In that sacred place they probably remained until after the Prayer of Intercession. More than place or time is meant by going hence. Master and apostles are standing together in one of God's moments in history. Now is the crisis of this world. The cross is calling the faith of Christ to make its last and infinite leap, ere Satan be cast out, and the Father glorified in the redemption of the world. The Son of Man had broken with the past before, when he went out from his home at Nazareth to receive the baptism of John; when he emerged victorious from the wilderness, the glory of the world behind him,

and the cross ahead; when he made choice of the twelve apostles to be his trained witnesses. But now the past has drunk its fill from the springs of his life, and the preparation of the world for its redemption is complete. The future is impatient, and the calling cross stands waiting. And Jesus, knowing that his hour is come, having finished his Father's work, is ready to be offered. He foresees that the fruit of his sacrifice will be a redeemed humanity, and his cross a throne of sovereign love, under the dominion of which he will at last unite all men in a kingdom of righteousness and fellowship of truth. In order that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. In obedience to him, that he may be glorified before the children of disobedience, and they from sin be delivered, let us arise and go hence. It was the call of the cross to the Master that uttered itself in his command to the apostles to go hence with him upon their world-wide mission.

The call of the cross to Christ was the summons of the disciples to a larger career in

God's great world of need and sorrow and sin. It was a call to move out from the old life of self-seeking and misunderstanding, of pupilage and correction, into a new life of self-renunciation and intelligent and tireless action. The old life was closing in disaster and disappointment, disgrace and seeming defeat. The baptism of the Spirit, soon to be received, was the inward creation of a new life, the gift of a new energy, the kindling of a divine enthusiasm, that would make them beacons of truth to weary centuries of falsehood. The cross that called their Lord to a sacrificial death called the disciples to a sacrificial life.

How much was involved in that summons to go hence, what labors and sufferings, they could not then be made to understand. The Lord had many things to say unto them which they were not yet able to bear. What he had told them they now comprehended not. That they were to be social outcasts, despised and hated of men, arraigned as criminals before judges and kings, seems not yet to have impressed itself upon them as a fact. The first steps of the new life were

taken in utter darkness. So far as their faith could see, they were walking the ways of failure and death, not life and victory. They heard the call of the cross, but saw neither throne nor crown.

But the Lord went with them; not merely through the night to the cross, but henceforth evermore. They were not, as they afterwards learned, called to obey the commands and imitate the example of a dead Christ, but to follow and trust a living Redeemer. Though the cross called them in ways they knew not, with a profounder meaning and to a greater work than they at first understood, in no walk or work were they absent from their Lord. Wherever he sent them, in the years which followed that night in which he bade them arise and go hence, his presence was always with them, an unfailing source of cheer and strength. As he led the way to his own cross, so he went before them in all the paths of obedience and action. Death did not take away their Lord, but only united him with them in closer and higher, holier and mightier, relations. He was with them always as a living Christ, rejoicing them

through all tribulations, sustaining them through all labors, inspiring all their words through the Spirit. While the call of the cross was indeed an appeal to their faith, a call to grief and loss, it was also a call to a life of joyous fellowship with Christ in the redemptive work of his love.

The calling cross forever stands, a continuous summons to our faith and devotion to manifest themselves in self-denying lives of love and work. The cross of our Christ can never rightly mean less to us than the entire dedication of all our powers and energies to him as our ever-present Saviour and King. But there are times when the call of the cross is instinct with a new emphasis; when the summons of Christ to a completer self-surrender, to a more consecrated life, is as clear to us as it was to the twelve upon that memorable night. There are epochs in our lives when we see that the old way of living, however full of hope it may once have been, is not the way of life in which we must henceforth set our feet. The low ambitions of the past are seen to be shameful. Dreams of power and happiness once so fair have grown

repulsive. Needs once embracing our estimate of the worth of life are felt no longer. Old hopes are now forgotten. New revelations of truth make wrong what once was right. Things once the end of life are seen to be but means. Past fellowships and joys, moral achievements, plans and toils, were but a preparation for the time when we must go forth upon a new course of life. The cup of the past is full, and to give it more of life is waste. We are at the end of the old way, and to turn our steps backward, in the paths from which we are clearly called, is to outrage conscience and deny the living Christ.

To these epochal moments, summoning us to a larger life, we are all brought. The Lord comes to us in some sudden flash of light; some proffered opportunity of larger service; some life-long sorrow that comes to make the heart its home; some fruitful fellowship with a new friend, whose life reveals hitherto unseen possibilities in our humanity; some great vacancy left in the soul by a departed hope; some great wrong that presses upon us as meant for our righting; some appeal of a great need in city, church, or state;—in some

moment like one of these the Son of God comes to each of us, perhaps when we think not, bidding us arise and enter upon a diviner course of life. But however unexpected the moment or the hour, he has yet made himself known, commanding that we let self alone for awhile, and work out the larger problems of life with the new resources which he puts in our hands. In that rare hour of communion we stood close by the cross of our Christ, and heard its sweet, strong call to purer, greater and more unselfish living. There spoke a voice in our souls: "Arise, let us go hence." When we obeyed that call a new world of truth and work opened to our vision.

"And there have fallen from us, as we traveled,
Many a burden of an ancient pain—
Many a tangled cord hath been unraveled,
Never to bind our foolish heart again."

The call to larger life, to wider usefulness, to more heroic endeavor, to truer consecration, is always the call of the cross. Whenever the Son of Man appears to summon you to action, by the way of the cross he invariably leads you. The first principle of all well-done work is self-renunciation. A faith that is not strong enough to leap away from self

into the unseen and unknown is not the faith that works righteousness in the world. He is no loyal follower of Christ who demands to see along the ways he is being led. Entire self-abandonment, the surrender of all claims to the disposal of one's own life, the willingness not to see, is the first condition of all discipleship. All righteous work is vicarious. It is impossible that you serve your age, in its crises and opportunities, without bearing away its sins and burdens in your own soul. Christ never pointed out a path of duty, or commanded a service, or disclosed a new career of life, that had not somewhere in it a Gethsemane and a Calvary. To be a Christian according to Christ means, first and always, the unreserved surrender of self to him as Master, for him to do with as he wills. The call to be a Christian, or a better Christian, is a summons to be no more your own man but Christ's self-renounced man; to dedicate your life with all its powers and possessions, your occupations and energies, to the righteousness to which Christ dedicated himself; to live among your associates, in whatever sphere of life you move, in your

church and out of it, for the very same end that Christ lived. It is a call to make Christ's cause your cause; to make the accomplishment of that for which Christ spake and lived and died the authoritative mission of your life; to make Christ's faith in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man your faith. To live a Christian life means, in the real sense, the giving of your whole course of procedure to the direction of Jesus as your living King.

It is this element of continuous loyalty to Jesus, in the faith that he is a present and reigning Christ, that not only constitutes the distinctive feature of Christianity, and thus differentiates it from other religions, but also makes it the permanent creative and constructive force in human history. It is the faith of the New Testament that loyalty to Christ fruits in all virtues, because they are the outgrowth of the indwelling Christ who is himself the source of all righteousness. And it is the failure to keep foremost the fact that Christianity is loyalty to Christ, accompanied by the fact that loyalty to Christ means the entire surrender of self to his authority and

guidance, that constitutes the shameful weakness of Christendom in the face of the great needs and duties which are calling the church of our day to a new career and a more comprehensive mission.

For, let it be clearly understood, so far as this voice is to interpret, that being a Christian is something more than being a good man, according to common standards of goodness. It is a sad misconception of Christianity, fatal alike to doctrine and practice, which permits the thought to get abroad in the world that being a Christian is simply obedience to current moral and religious customs. One may possess the natural qualities that make up an admirable character, and yet lack the distinctive feature and experience that belong to a genuine Christian manhood or womanhood. He may live an agreeable and peaceful life, disturbing not his times, and quietly attending to his own business, faultless in his conduct so far as it comprehends the meaning of life, yet be without Christ and his hope in the world. He may be good in the sight of God as well as man, and yet not be Christian, just as a violet may

be perfect after its kind, and beautiful to look upon; harmless, too, where a flame would be terribly destructive, but still a violet; and God does not light the world with violets.

Natural goodness is not Christian virtue. It is good as far as it goes. It may be the basis, or even a fruit, of the Christian life; but it does not in itself make one Christian. Christianity is infinitely more than natural goodness. A Christian is a supernatural being, who has had a supernatural experience, and possesses more than natural resources for thought and action. He does not live an unnatural life, nor is the natural evil in his sight; but there is more of him than there is in nature. The Christian takes in, more or less perfectly, the good of nature; but he takes to it the good that is supernatural. The new birth, which is a supernatural experience, whether its travail be long or short, invests character with more than the most faultless natural qualities. It is a second creation, making a man a citizen of another world than the one he sees with the eyes of sense. The newborn man is a distinctly different creature from the man at his side, who, so far as the un-

spiritualized eye can see, is every whit his moral equal. For the natural man, though truly a work of God, naturally good as he may be, receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them; because they are spiritually examined. One may be a careful and conscientious student of Christianity, knowing Christianity as a religious science, and a catalogue of religious facts, yet know nothing of Christianity as a spiritual life. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Not that nature is evil—it is good and beautiful—but transient, shadowy, and insubstantial; only meant to serve a temporal and educational purpose. The spiritual alone is the real and eternal. The natural is not bad; it simply does not comprehend the spiritual. The whole natural world may be squeezed dry, and there is not enough in it to make a Christian character. From the natural point of view, the Christian life is a sustained miracle, a supernatural career. It is greater than the powers of nature, transcending all the possibilities of nature. It is nourished by moral meat and drink that

nature cannot supply. And what we now need for the future development of Christian thought is not so much the knowledge of natural law in the spiritual world as the re-discovery of spiritual law in the natural world.

The Christian is Christ continued—divine incarnation increased and carried along. He is a man of whom God has gotten possession and anointed with Christ's anointing, which is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Christian virtue is natural goodness aflame with God. That which distinguishes Christian virtue from natural goodness, and from the undisturbed repose which is the ideal of Epictetus and the Stoic philosophers, is a divine and quenchless enthusiasm. The apostles worked and spoke at white heat. They burned as white flames of holiness, the breath of God flashing their light across the nations. They spoke with tongues of fire, and dipped their pens in the blood of their hearts. They entreated and rebuked with an intensity that seemed to men of the world as madness. They entered the godless cities as men turning the world upside down. They walked

the earth as its conquerors, armed with weapons handed down from the skies. They were in the world but not of it, and the stars were their friends. They were serene; but theirs was the serenity of high and holy passions. And others have been caught in their flame, the Florentine monks of Saint Mark's, the Waldenses and Huguenots, the Lollards and the Pilgrims, Edwards and Wesley and Finney, and a great multitude whom no man can number, keeping faith alive in the race, lavishing themselves upon an unfriendly world, and growing large through burning and rich in giving. And faith and virtue have not perished from among men because some have always lived to whom faith was a life, and not an opinion; to whom virtue was a passion, and not a pleasant study. It is the baptism of the Holy Christ-Spirit, which is the passion of God for righteousness, kindling, illuminating, transforming the life of the man until he becomes a living, burning word of God—it is this baptism, this being caught up in a flame from the sin-consuming fire of God, this conversion of one's whole being into an energy

of truth and love, that makes virtue distinctively Christian. It is the virtue that cannot and dare not take its ease in the face of the sin and woe of the world. When goodness becomes merely passive, like that of the professional Christian of our day, or a mere moral self-culture, like that of the philosophers, it ceases to be Christian. It is, I do not forget, good, what there is of it, and brings with it happiness; but it lacks the one element that would make it Christian; it has not the power that saves the world. Christian virtue finds its rest in wearing a yoke of toil, and enters the joy of the Lord on the field of conflict against unrighteousness. The rest of Christ is the burden of others. The peace of Christ is the armor of God for battle and conquest. The faith of Christ is omnipotent power to work righteousness.

Now the fact that the Christian life is supernatural, and is so supreme a life, so far beyond the reach of the natural man, is not a discouragement, but an overwhelming encouragement. If I supposed myself sent forth on a Christian career dependent upon any natural resources, or any help or strength

I can feel or see in nature, I should think the Gospel a divine tantalism. But I know that I am sent, as you are sent, in the power of the immanent and sovereign Christ, renewing our life when the resources of the world are exhausted, giving a quenchless joy when happiness takes wing. He, the ever-living and all-present Christ, is our strength and song. The transforming power of the indwelling Christ is our purification. Unqualified submission to him, not obedience to any code of morals, is our safety. By faith in Christ as a constant and personal Redeemer is the fallen human life made divine. We are sent hence from this sacred place, to make righteousness the purpose and passion of our life, in company with Christ. Fellowship with him is our growth. He is our peace, his love, our strength. Through bringing all we have to his feet, through the entire commitment of our lives unto his keeping, through the absolute dedication of all self-interest to his kingdom, we are able to see the sin of our hearts and make no terms with it, neither despair at our weakness. By faith in his power to make us whole may we see God

and live. In the faith that Christ, through the Spirit, is working out his redemption to its full fruition have we courage and power to make righteousness our occupation, and all material things its ministers. Because he lives we live also. Because he is in the world, we can live as sons of God who fear not the world, facing its confident and jeering battalions of selfishness serene and triumphant, knowing that he who began the good work of straightening out this crooked world has power in heaven and on earth to complete the work.

Wherefore, though a man of Christ be driven to shame and sickness of heart by the question of what one poor, sinful soul can do, he may arise and go about his work in the faith that the Son of Man has overcome the world, and is going forth conquering and to conquer. Though the forces of wrong have endured so long and strong; though Cain takes Christ's name, and hides his brother's blood in silken garments, and sits on mammon's throne, and rules awhile the nations; yet faith acts as seeing the invisible Christ already upon the throne of universal dominion,

and is persuaded that neither powers nor principalities, things present nor things to come, can separate the world from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, unto whom every knee in heaven and on earth shall yet rejoice to bow. Though the world smile while the life of faith flings reputation and comfort away to beat itself against the mountain masses of human sin, to be mangled upon the rocks of human pride, to be trampled under the feet of human selfishness, yet faith knows that God and history will vindicate its wisdom.

And because this life is of God and not of man, of the Spirit and not the flesh, it is offered without measure unto all the sons of men. Whoever will may freely drink of the water of this spiritual life. The reason why some more clearly than others are seen to be the sons of God is in the fact that some received the gifts of God, while others doubt and delay. I doubt not there were many intellects in Galilee as great as Peter's, but they did not devote themselves with the same self-abandon to their Lord. Not in any divine partiality, but in the quality and continuity

of self-surrender, is the difference in the spiritual power of the followers of Christ. That some are divinely exalted, is due to the fact that they have humbled themselves unconditionally at his feet. The offers of the Spirit are made without discrimination. As empty as any of you are of self, so full you may be of the living Christ. Whoever will may make the self-surrender that is rewarded with the gifts of God. Whoever will sell all that he hath, may buy the pearl of a priceless character. Whoever will bear the cross of absolute self-renunciation, may wear the crown of divine righteousness. Whoever is willing to part with all the garments of pride and selfishness, may carry the sword of resistless holiness.

My brother, there is no reason in heaven or beneath, why you should not, at this moment, in this holy place and hour, lay your heart upon the altar of a perfect sacrifice in the service of your Lord Christ. There is not an excuse that will stand at the judgment seat of mercy, not an excuse that will stand at the judgment bar of your own conscience, before the cross of the living Christ, now calling you

to make an unconditional and immediate dedication of all your powers and possessions unto the work of fulfilling his redemption in an unbelieving world. I am not asking you to agree with any set of opinions, nor whether you are a member of a church, or ignorant or wise; I ask you, yea, in Christ's stead I beseech you, to make a surrender of yourself that shall be unreserved and complete, keeping nothing back. I plead with you to go from here with Christ as your Master, as well as Saviour, to work with him in the holy determination that your occupation, whatever it may be, shall be a communion with God; that the city in which you live shall be a city of God; that the church you make your home shall flash far and wide the flame of the Christ-Spirit. I appeal to you to take the mission of Jesus as your mission, and live to make this world in which you live a new world. Whatever your circumstances or temptations; be your past what it may, your future to you uncertain; though many your doubts and fearful your struggles; however long you may have been at ease, and walked your own religious way; be you in the church

or out of it; I entreat you to present yourself a living sacrifice to the slain Christ, and receive grace whereby you may offer well-pleasing service unto God. You have no right to suit the convenience of your opinions or circumstances. You are bought with a price, and are not your own. You belong to God; and one is your Master, even Jesus, who pleased not himself, but for the joy of serving endured the cross, despising the shame of worldly scorn and failure.

However narrow your sphere of life, however grinding your occupation and hard your daily task, there is room for you to quit yourself as a man of the cross in this world of strife and want. You have the same resources, and a vaster scope for your powers, than the apostles who went out to Gethsemane with their Lord, on the night of his betrayal. There is work, and to spare, and reason for sacrifice, for all souls brave enough to follow the conquering Christ through the great doors of opportunity the questions of our day are swinging open for the leadership of the sons of God. We live in a world that has well-nigh won the church which was sent

to conquer it. And the church which bears Christ's name is coming to the end of its old ease-loving and self-satisfied way of living, with the ideal of the cultured pagan substituted for the changeless cross, and must be started upon a new career of action by apostles who dare make themselves of no reputation, that they may lift the cross anew above the wisdom and customs of the world. Worthless as we feel ourselves to be, the Lord hath need of you and me in this matchless work. However fettered by circumstances, though helpless we feel before the arrogant forces of evil, the Holy Spirit will come upon us in power if we arise and go hence from this room and hour with self-emptying souls at the bidding of the Lord Christ.

The calling cross stands waiting for you and me to go and have our wills nailed upon it, that we may witness for the saving Christ in the power of a deeper experience. Into the sanctuary of our souls there comes, this morning, the Christ of our redemption, appealing to our gratitude and loyalty, our manhood and womanhood. By the power of his

pierced hands; by his deathless love which took into itself the suffering of our sins; by the sorrow that broke his heart, and the blood that flowed from his side; by the sublime opportunities for service, and the perils which cry aloud to the sleeping church from the future; by the wide wastes of human woe, and the hungry voices of human need; by the great harvests of human souls that wait for loving hands to reap;—by these, and countless more, the living Christ speaks to our devotion, calling us to go hence with him as our Master, and we his loyal subjects.

The word I bring you, at this time, is not mine, but his who calls and sends. It is the call of the cross, sounding down through the centuries, growing sweeter with each new crisis, articulate with judgment, victory and peace. The changeless cross of the living Christ calls you and me, this very hour, to a larger life of sacrifice, prayer and action. Arise, let us go hence.



II

The Question of the Ages

So Donal lives a present power of heat and light in the place. Most of his early friends are gone, but he wears yet the same solemn look, with the same hovering smile. It seems to say to those who can read it, "I know in whom I have believed." And he in whom he believed more and more was that God who is the Father of the Lord. His life was hid with Christ in God, and he had no anxiety about anything. The wheels of the coming chariot, moving slow or fast to fetch him, were always moving; and whether it arrived at night, or at cock-crowing, or in the full blaze of noon, is all one to him. He is ready for the new life his Arctura knows. "God is," he will say, coming out of one of his talking moods; "God is, and all is well." When he has said that, he never says anything more, but listens only to those about him. He never disputes, rarely seeks to convince. "I will do what I can to let what light I have shine; but disputation is smoke, and serves only to obscure the light. It is to no profit—and I do like," he will say, "to give and to get the good of things!"

—*George MacDonald.*

II

The Question of the Ages

Pilate said unto them, What then shall I do with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say, Let him be crucified.—*Matt.* xxvii: 22

This was a question Pilate had no right to ask. The final judgment of the case of Jesus rested with himself. The attempt to evade his responsibility by casting it upon the Jews was shameful and cowardly. The washing of his hands before the multitude, instead of acquitting him of Christ's blood, was Pilate's self-condemnation. It was for him, not the rabble, to decide what should be done with Christ. In turning from the decision of his conscience to the clamors of the envious priests; in listening to the voice of the mob rather than the divine voice that was speaking in his soul; in consulting his political safety rather than what he knew to be justice, Pilate partook of the guilt of the Jews. In

the crisis of his life, in the supreme moment of history, in one of the sublimest opportunities God ever gave to man for moral greatness, Pilate failed.

Nor can it be said in his justification that the sacrifice of Christ was a foregone conclusion, divinely decreed before the beginning of the world, and determined upon by the Jews even at the cost of rebellion against the Roman authorities. He cannot be excused on the ground that all Jerusalem would had to have been sacrificed had not Christ been delivered up. He believed in Christ's innocence of moral sin or legal crime. As a minister of justice it was his duty, as a Roman governor it would have been to his honor, to protect Christ from persecution and violence, though it cost him his own life.

The answer to Pilate's question was freighted with vaster consequences than the replying Jews understood. The chief men of Israel did not know, what was nevertheless true, that the destiny of their nation and the fate of their religion depended upon their decision concerning Christ. Their rejection of Christ was a revelation of their own murderous self-

ishness and hopeless hypocrisy. In rejecting Christ, they rejected the highest manifestation of God's goodness. When they cried unto Pilate their willingness to have the blood of Christ rest upon themselves and their children they were unknowingly prophesying the fate which befell their children, and the dreadful destruction which came to their city and temple a few years later, when besieged and taken by Titus and his Roman legions. Then uncounted thousands perished by fire and sword and famine, and mothers mad with hunger ate their babes, and the Jewish nation became extinct; the people filled up the measure of their father's iniquity, to become wanderers upon the face of the earth, which they are to this day.

Do not think by this that God arbitrarily punishes men for intellectual unbelief. I wish I might dispel such a notion, right here, from your thoughts forever. The teaching that God accepts or rejects men on account of their religious opinions is a frightful perversion of the gospel of Christ. It is not upon the forms in which we apprehend or misapprehend the truth that eternal judgment

is passed; but upon the attitude of soul which lies behind all belief and unbelief. A man may have intellectual doubts about the truth he believes in and lives by; he may build his character out of moral stuff which he has never been able to analyze. And the most Christless living, the most heartless infidelity I have ever seen, stalked about in an impenetrable garb of orthodoxy.

Salvation through faith in Christ is as simple as the law of gravity. Christ is the magnet which God passes over the souls and institutions of men, revealing their moral quality. When a soul is brought face to face with Christ, the attitude it assumes towards Christ reveals its inmost spiritual substance. The moment he appears, when his call comes to follow him in living to do good to others and deny self, the way in which we look upon him and hear and heed his call is a manifestation of our real character. As many as repent and turn unto him are saved, because they reveal that beneath all the folly and shame, the hate and deceit, the waste and misery, there is alive within them a moral essence like the essence of Christ. The

most fallen life that creeps in the moral darkness of the earth, the vilest creature that wears a human face, if he looks at the life of Christ and sees therein what he longs to be like, no matter how feeble and hesitating the hands of faith that reach piteously up to the divine mercy, he reveals at once that inside of his corruption and weakness is a living germ of the divine life; for Christ has never drawn, nor can he ever draw, a soul to himself that has not something of the Christ-nature within. But if a man sees in Christ what he does not want to be, if the life of Christ is not such as he would give his all to live, then he does not in any vital sense, believe in Christ; his opinions as to what Christ was, or who he is, have nothing to do with his salvation from sin, and its wages of death. If there is no affinity between a soul and Christ, if the soul's hard selfishness is not melted by the supreme manifestation of God's goodness in Christ, then the soul is lost, though its religious opinions meet the unqualified endorsement of all the scribes of traditionalism. Christ cannot help himself in the matter of judging it lost. Being what he is, he cannot

judge otherwise than he does. The judgments of Christ are something infinitely more serious and divine, more reasonable and natural, than a judgment upon our theological beliefs and unbeliefs. Christ's judgment is a bringing to light our real self, whether it be good or evil; a calling forth of the man or the woman hidden from the eyes of the world by theological clothes and religious etiquette. Customs and opinions, books and clothes, creeds and manners, count for nothing in the presence of Christ. True and righteous altogether are his judgments. It is this tremendous fact of the righteousness of his judgments which makes our dallying with our opportunities to know and serve Christ supremely awful. A man's moral attitude toward Christ is a perfect revelation of what the man is. *Christ himself is God's eternal judgment upon human character.*

What shall I do with Christ? Every problem of life reduces itself to this question. Every soul is a judgment-hall wherein Christ is always on trial. Life with each of us is a continuous crucifixion or a continuous exaltation of Christ. Whether we so intend it

or not, every thought, word, or deed, is an answer to Pilate's question. In every step, so far as my life counts, I am deciding the fate of Christ in the world; either defeating or fulfilling the eternal purpose of God concerning the world. What will or will not become of me, whether what I am doing or not doing is right or wrong, is not the real statement of the question that always confronts me. Every word and deed of mine inwraps the destiny of the race, and is a judgment upon Christ. Every compromise with wrong, every tolerance with sin, every failure to be a brother to my fellow-men, is a betrayal of Christ to his enemies. Every selfishly spoken word, every selfishly done deed, is a new crucifixion of our Lord.

You have a business transaction in hand. What will you do with Christ in that? You cannot act as though he were not; for he was, and is, and is to come. He has bought you with an unreckonable price. Out of the sacrificial agony of his great soul was your redemption born. You belong to him, every breath of your being. You can have no spiritual existence apart from him. You can be

nothing good, nor do nothing right, that is not the impulse of his Spirit. The least that you can do to show that you cherish his great salvation is to make his presence manifest in every affair of your life. Nothing short of his absolute supremacy in this business dealing is honorable. What will you do with him? Will you make this trade a confession of your faith in Christ, of your confidence in the practicability of his Golden Rule, or make it simply a matter of gain? You have afflictions. Will you commit the sin of consuming in idle, selfish grief the strength that belongs to him to use in blessing others? Will you make the thorns in your flesh the ministers of his glory, or the witnesses of your selfishness? You sustain relations to your fellow-children in Christ. Shall Christ or self rule in your affections and friendships? Will you make Christ the joy of your human fellowships, or will you sink to the degradation of using them only as a means of enjoyment? Has Christ been crucified or enthroned in your earthly relationships? What will you do with Christ when you go to places of amusement? What will you do with Christ when you buy and sell?

Have you placed your ballot in the palm that was pierced for you? You can think nothing, love nothing, decide nothing, that is not either a rejection or acceptance of Christ.

And, while you are considering this question, let me ask you to keep in mind that you are deciding the fate of a living, and not a dead Christ. He is the same human Christ to-day as when he toiled at Capernaum or rested at Bethany. His relation to men is not different now from what it was when he taught the multitudes on the mountain. He lives as a man; he lives as our Master, in whom God still treasures all hidden knowledge; he lives as a Redeemer, showing us the Father, revealing us to ourselves. He is with you always. He is here this morning. What to do with him is a question as inevitable in your life as it was in the life of Pilate. As truly as Pilate you are sitting in judgment upon a living Christ, to-day, and deciding, so far as you are concerned, his acceptance or rejection by the world. What will you do with him?

Sometimes, as in the case of Pilate, the lines of inward conflict are clearly drawn. It

is clearly seen that upon a single decision depends the destiny of Christ in the life. And there is, besides, the consciousness, or fear, that vast and unseen interests of the kingdom of God are involved in the conflict. A man is sometimes overborne with the feeling, which he cannot rid himself of, nor yet understand, that he is deciding larger things than he knows of. A soul sometimes finds itself staggering under the weight of great responsibilities, while ignorant of what they are. Every man who has heeded Christ's call to surrender, and gird himself for a divine work, has had to choose, sometime and somewhere, between crucifixion with Christ and the kingdoms of the world and their glory. While the whole life seemed condensed into a supreme and solitary struggle, the Lord suffered Satan to press into one cup all the essence of the joy and sweetness of the world; all the heart craved; all the soul yearned to possess. Eager hands of quenchless passion reached to seize and drink the cup. Just then Christ passed to the soul his own cup—the cup of absolute death to the world; of entire surrender of all selfish interest in everything that

would have made life glad and glorious and strong. Would the soul drink of the cup of the world's joy and glory, or of the cup Christ gives it? Could not some drops of worldly bliss be mixed in the cup of Christ? No. Did it need to be drunk to the last drop? Yes. The issue was clearly defined, and there was no mistaking it. Either self or Christ had to be crucified. As the conflict deepened, all the truth of Christ, all the power of faith, all the soul's hope of a resurrection, was called upon to stand up and prove itself. Great gaps appeared in the soul's faith, and depthless abysses about it yawned. But when the crisis had done its work, and the soul came forth with the bonds of the world broken, and the sacrifice of self complete, it found itself ensphered with the freedom of God, and borne on by the deep sweep of God's Spirit. And if this experience I have been rudely describing is unreal to you, think not that it will always be so. Every soul great and daring enough, as every soul can be, needs to be watching as one who expects, yet knows not when, the Lord may appear to it in some vast spiritual crisis, out of which

it will issue like Pilate, the master opportunity of life irrecoverably gone, or come forth a new soul, strong in the delight of its own triumph, and the joy of the Lord its strength. And the rich, new life born out of the anguish of such an experience—just a year of such life—is worth a myriad ages of the unheroic professional Christianity that is the staple of our modern churches.

But in whatever ways we are deciding, whether in our common tasks, or in great moral crises, we are each moment, as I said to you when I began, giving our decision as to what shall be the destiny of Christ in the life of the world.

Whenever we turn from the divine voice within our souls, the answer will always be, Let him be crucified. We crucify Christ when we refer the question of what we shall do with him to some experience in the past. What shall I do with Christ, is always a present question. It always demands a present answer. We cannot make some past consecration a substitute for a present decision. Yesterday's experience will not answer for to-day's call for reconsecration. No conver-

sion is safe that is not followed by a continuous self-dedication to Christ. No consecration is honest that is not made a point from which to advance to profounder consecrations. No victory can be secured except by greater victories. No deliverance is lasting that does not prove itself by delivering others. No salvation is eternal that is not tremblingly wrought out by the inworking energy of God. No faith is more than an indolent profession that does not speak to the world in loving service. It is useless to you to have been born again unless you keep growing again. God's Christ and man's need are the two changeless facts of all spiritual growth. What you did with Christ yesterday is no reply to the question of what you will do with Christ to-day. To try to make the past answer for the present, is a piece of moral cowardice as childish as Pilate's washing of his hands.

Neither can we depend upon our nearest friends to decide for us what we shall do with Christ. The best of them will unknowingly advise his crucifixion when they see the crucifixion of self to be the other alternative. Few friends are divinely true enough to look

beyond the pains and losses, and rejoice in the griefs and disappointments of those they love, and see the ennobled character which God is forming in the furnace. It is a rare son that has an Abraham for a father, willing to put the knife to all his son's worldly hopes in order that the will of God may be done in his son's life as it is done in heaven. It is an uncommon friend that can thrust the one he loves best into the consuming flames of divine purification. The highest expression of friendship ever uttered upon earth was that of our Lord in his Intercessory Prayer: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." The great human heart of Christ yearned to enfold those stricken and bewildered disciples and bear them out of the tribulation and sorrow which he knew they must endure because of their love for him. When he put aside those impulses, and committed them with perfect trust unto his Father and their Father, willing to have them sacrificed as he was being sacrificed, rejoicing to have them suffer for redemption's sake as he had suffered, he shows us the friendship

for man which springs from the heart of God. But seldom do our friends bless us with this deepest and divinest quality of friendship. Rarely do they fail to mix the world's wisdom with the wisdom of the gospel in their advice. Only the Word that was in Christ, and seeks to dwell in you and me, can tell us what to do with Christ.

Surely the world cannot tell us what to do with Christ. It has always clamored for his crucifixion; and all our selfish impulses join in the clamor. And the larger the power of Christ in the world, the greater the manifestations of his glory, the angrier will be the demand for his crucifixion. The devils always tear a man most violently just before Christ casts them out. The more fully Christ gets things in order to deliver the world from the last of evil, and turn the key on the pit of darkness, the more boastful and desperate grow the demons of wickedness. There has never been such a cry for the death of the living Christ as there is in our day, because there is a feeling abroad in the world that Christ holds the key that alone can unlock the problems of the nations. Society would

crucify his authority because the times are instinct with the approaching doom of selfishness. Politicians affect to despise the eternal legislation of the Sermon on the Mount because the people are beginning to discern the moral humbuggery of a vast deal of what has hitherto passed in the world for statesmanship. Even the rulers of the church appear to be willing that Christ should be delivered to his enemies rather than that their creeds should be crucified. So the world, in none of its spheres, can rightly tell you what to do with Christ. It will, at its best, tell you that you do not need to be stretched upon Christ's cross of self-renunciation, which is the first law of discipleship. At its worst, it will scornfully repudiate Christ's doctrine of self-sacrifice, which is the essence of the gospel.

What to do with Christ is the question of the ages. It is the master question of our generation. God seems in these later days to be tightening his grip on the reins of human affairs, and to be driving the race with the swiftness of judgment to choose between the kingdom of Christ and no government at all; between the absolute reign of Christ and the

anarchy of absolute atheism. Though the world may try to evade the real issue, try to shut its eyes to the divine signals, try to halt between mammon and Christ, yet the inevitable issue of the swiftly converging crises of history will be the acceptance of Christ's law of love, with its thousand years of peace, or the triumph of the world-spirit of selfishness with its universal confusion and violence. The problems of our times are essentially the old conflict between Christianity and heathenism, refined and intensified. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, is God's answer to all modern questions. God is pushing the church to the point where it must exalt the supremacy of Christ as the king unto whom every knee must bow, and every affair of man be subject, or crucify the Lord afresh and bring upon itself a judgment that shall not leave one stone of its goodly temples upon another. The separation of life from religion, the division of human affairs into secular and spiritual, the artificial and immoral meanings which have been put into the word faith, the conception of redemption as a bridge between heaven and earth—this

- is the infidelity which the church has fostered, and which has given rise to the suspicion that Christ is not fairly represented by Christendom. I am sometimes oppressed with the fear that the church is sleeping within the gates of Gethsemane, while the soul of Christ agonizes in the birth-throes of some huge and universal crisis that is about to spring upon the earth, separating the true and faithful from the false and faithless. It may be that some of us will live to see the approach of Christ in some event that will make the earth pause and tremble, and decide what manner of men we are. But be our calls to service great or small—if there can be opportunities for good that are small—we need, above all else, to get close to Christ, and hear what he would say to each of us, and follow his leadership, rejoicing to share his fate at the hands of our generation, toiling with that victorious faith which can smile while the world works its worst upon it. He gives us no time to unravel the past or question the future. He calls us to leave all at once and follow him, from thought to thought, from deed to deed, caring not for reputation or happiness, but

absorbed altogether in that divinest of human motives—the redemption of the world in his name.

I have not asked you, dear friends, to consider what Christ may do with you. That would be indeed a question of great and serious moment. What becomes of your soul is a question in which God and all the universe are interested. But your soul's salvation has been pressed upon your concern times without number. And the religious thought of the past few years has undergone a great change in its ways of apprehending Christ. We are trying to say, "I am Christ's," as well as, "Christ is mine," and say it with a new emphasis and larger meaning. We are beginning to dimly see and understand something of what our Lord meant by saying that the truly saved life is the one that has been lost. A religion that is occupied with no more than the saving of one's soul is not Christian, whatever else it may be. What will or will not become of your soul is only the beginning of what is involved in your decisions. They affect the whole kingdom of God. Every moral victory of yours is a

triumph for the race. All humanity shares in the shame or the glory of your deeds. No man ever casts the wealth of his life and the crown of his devotion at the feet of Jesus without quickening the earth with a diviner life, and uplifting it with new courage.

So, it is not alone for your soul's sake that I ask you to cast in your lot with Christ. It is for the sake of the living Christ himself who has bought your allegiance with his blood, to whom you belong, body and soul, heart and brain, that I appeal to you to give him the life which is justly his. He has earned his right to your life; he has won his kingship over the world, and them that dwell therein. Your king appears, in this morning of matchless need and peerless opportunities, to claim your loving loyalty and grateful obedience as a reasonable service. He is doing the same work to-day that he did when followed by Peter and John. He needs the same quality of discipleship from you and me that he asked of them; the same heroic personal devotion, the same enthusiasm for righteousness, the same self-abandonment in service. You have no right to revolve about the question of

personal salvation in the presence of the slain Christ, who calls for you to deny yourself and follow him, in overcoming the world for God. It is Christ who is on trial in the courts of your mind. Out of moral necessity your judgment upon Christ will be Christ's judgment upon you. He could not make it otherwise if he would.

And not only for his sake, but for the sake of the world which he has redeemed, do I ask you to ally yourself with Christ. It was for the redemption of Israel that Peter and John followed Christ. It was for his disciples' sakes Christ sanctified himself unto the Father. It was for the redemption of a lost world he joyfully endured the cross and despised its shame. *And to the measure of your capacity you are as responsible for the fate of the world as Jesus was.* You have no more right to make your soul's safety your fundamental object than Jesus had. For the sake of all your fellow-men you are morally bound to follow this Christ. No man liveth or dieth unto himself. The race is one as your body is one. Just so surely as no member of your body can suffer without the whole body being weakened, that

surely no man sins without every human being suffering pain and moral weakness. The race must stand or fall together. Without regard to your intention, you are in ways unknown forming the characters and making the histories of unnumbered lives. You are living for the weal or woe of the earth. Your words and deeds are as far reaching as life. You are sent, as Jesus was sent, charged with the eternal responsibility of making God glorious in the eyes of men by manifesting him in your life. For the sake of the lives you touch, for good or ill, I beseech you to follow the calling Christ.

What will you do with this Christ? He is now on trial in your soul. The final judgment of his case rests with you alone. Would that I might say some word to turn the scale of your judgment in his favor! I have tried this Christ of ours, and know him to be true. I have found his promises more than fulfilled. His sufficiency has been greater than my needs. The word of life I bring you is what I have handled, and I know it is able to make the humblest life of sternest toil a song of God.

What will you do with Christ? This is the

question that is sounding in every modern question. It is a question I hear when I place my ear upon the earth and hear the steady march of coming revolutions. It is a question which will answer every other question of your life. It is the question I bring you, this morning, from the heart of God. It is the question that is borne to you upon every wail of human woe and every cry of human need. It is the question your sciences are writing on your brains, and your dollars burning on your palms; that stares at you from every printed page, and leaps in every pulse-beat, and appeals to every instinct of human nobleness. It is the question that gathers an eternity into every moment, and invests the smallest deed and idlest word with an infinite significance. It is the question you will decide to-day, whether you would or not. You cannot escape the question, nor avoid the answer. Before the night closes you in its rest you will have either crucified or enthroned the Christ. What will you do with him?

O, my brother! come and clasp hands with me and let us follow this slain yet living Christ in the victory of faith that is conquer-

ing the earth for God, and making it new for man. There will be conflicts and sorrows; and as you come to know Christ you will be dumb before the visions you get of your uncleanness of heart and selfishness of action. You will sometimes cry in anguish that it is not meet that Christ's holy name be on your lips; and nothing will so stagger your understanding as his willingness to use you. But when the day of battle is done, and the night of rest comes on, we shall sleep the sweet sleep of victors, who were of good cheer amidst life's tribulations; who scorned the world's defeats, and beat down its demons of doubt, and trampled upon its dragons of lust, and made servants of its sorrows, and pressed on through the illusions of its prosperity up the heights of faith where the Son of God leads the way. And when the morning breaks over our souls, we shall awake satisfied in Christ's likeness, crowned with his righteousness, the heat of the conflict cooled in the dew of the morning, our scars touched with a sacred glory, and our heart-aches healed forever. And from out the throne that rules the deathless land shall come forth the Lamb of

God to feed us with the bread of love, and
lead soul to soul by the still waters of un-
troubled life.



III

The Divine Method of Culture

Before the monstrous wrong he sets him down—
One man against a stone-walled city of sin.
For centuries those walls have been a-building;
Smooth porphyry, they slope and coldly glass
The flying storm and wheeling sun. No chink,
No crevice lets the thinnest arrow in.
He fights alone, and from the cloudy ramparts
A thousand evil faces gibe and jeer him.
Let him lie down and die. What is the right,
And where is justice in a world like this?
But by and by, earth shakes herself, impatient;
And down in one great roar of ruin, crash
Watch-tower and citadel and battlements.
When the red dust has cleared, the lonely soldier
Stands with strange thoughts beneath the friendly stars.

—*Edward Rowland Sill.*

III

The Divine Method of Culture

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.—*John* xvi: 12, 13.

At the time they were spoken these words doubtless conveyed little meaning to the apostles. He whom they had hoped would redeem Israel was about to be taken from them, so he was saying, with the past yet a mystery and the future undisclosed. Jesus had trained them to obey him as their king, promising that his kingdom should overcome the world; yet the rulers had rejected him, and now it seemed that he was mistaken in regard to himself, though they loved and trusted him unto the end. Often, during the hours of precious intercourse with their Lord, through the eager days of hopeful toil in his service, it had seemed to the disciples that the

time was near when he would take his place on the throne of David, and lead the waiting populace to the overthrow of Rome; but they were always disappointed. Now they stood together in impenetrable darkness, clinging to their Lord with a blind, bewildered and pathetic faith—a faith sustained by a love too great to die. The nature of Christ's kingdom and its weapons of conquest they had not yet grasped. His vision of a spiritually redeemed earth had not yet purified their hopes. Between the promises of the Lord and their fulfillment spread a passless sea of contradiction. The things that Christ had done to them, and the words he had spoken, they understood not. They knew not yet the scriptures, nor the meaning of the Lord's teachings, nor the reason of his deeds, nor the work for which he had chosen them. They had not apprehended that for which Christ had apprehended them. And he had yet many things to say to them which they were not able to bear.

But after the ascension of the risen Christ they would be enabled to interpret the life he had lived among them, and understand the

words he had spoken. When the apostles were humbled under the hand of God, their wills prostrate before the divine will and their selfish hopes all perished, so that they were ready to rejoice in whatever God might teach them, then there would come to them a great inspiration, even the Spirit of truth, who should guide them unto all truth. Things the apostles could not bear to hear while standing there in the shadow of the cross, deeds waiting their doing that would now outrage their devotion, words waiting their speaking that would now stagger their understanding, highways of sacrifice along which they were to toil—all these would be made plain to them by the coming of the Spirit, who would reward their surrender and obedience in lighting up their minds to clearly understand the things of Christ. In other words, they should fully know the will of God when they were prepared to do that will, being emptied of all self-will. Obedience would lead to knowledge. They would learn the truth by doing the truth. The Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of truth, would be their guide into the realm of truth, the torch to light them through the darkness of the world.

The Holy Spirit is the mind of God. And when the mind of a man is brought into absolute subjection to the mind of God, so that he is completely under God's influence, he is baptized with the Holy Spirit; the soul of the man has been won by the soul of God, and his thoughts are henceforth God's thoughts, and the power of his life the power of God. Thus the pure in heart who see God, the meek who hear the whisper of God's secrets, the poor in spirit who receive the kingdom of heaven as little children, have a knowledge of God that is unsearchable to the natural mind—the world by wisdom knowing not God—and wield a power that transcends all the powers of the natural man.

God would freely give his Spirit without measure unto all. This is the end for which God is working. It is the completion of creation and the fulfillment of redemption. The time when all men shall know the Lord, when the knowledge of his glory shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, and his word be written in every human heart, was the vision of the prophets, lifting their hopes above the corruption of their times, and sustaining them

through great tribulations. An earth at one with heaven, the will of God done alike in each, is the divine expectation which the hand of God, in spite of the blindness and blundering and unbelief of man, has wrought into all the social fabrics of history. It is the thought with which Jesus worked, and the belief which inspired the letters of the apostles to the churches. It is the promise of God which crowns and closes the scriptures. It is the purpose for which the earth stands, that it may be the field in which God shall raise unto himself a race of children who shall be perfect images of his own character. With each successive generation God seeks to raise a better crop of men. Nor will his love be discouraged nor his patience fail, until the earth bring forth abundantly the fruits of heaven, and men know good but not evil, and God find no shame in the face of man when he walks his garden in the evening hour in search of human fellowships. For the heart of God is human and the heart of man divine; and the humanity of God can be satisfied with no less than the perfected divinity of man as it is in Jesus.

But divine revelation, though always leading human progress; though a new vision of God, a larger apprehension of truth, has ever begun the great upward movements of man's career; God is yet limited in his power to reveal the truth by man's capacity to understand. God is always speaking; but man does not hear. The angels of promise are always on the wing, and the messengers of truth move to and fro upon the earth, never leaving God without a witness; but unbelief blinds the eye and hardens the heart. God reveals himself in vain to eyes that see not, and speaks only for man's woe and his own sorrow to ears that hear not. He always has many things to say which must wait until men are ready to obey. The Spirit of truth guides into the realm of truth as far and fast as men are prepared to be led. God makes known as much truth as men are able to act upon. Not until we are enabled to bear the truth of God, the truth about ourselves, the truth supremely needful to our generation, the knowledge of our duty, does the revelation come. This is the divine method of culture. And it is rational. It is simply impossible for one whose whole mind

is centered on the material to understand the spiritual. The soul that is all absorbed in pleasure and gain will not be interested in efforts that make for righteousness. The man who is self-centered, whose religious motive is no larger than happiness and comfort on the earth and heaven after death, will be deaf to all appeals to deny himself and renounce all that he hath in favor of his Lord. Christ's doctrine of self-renunciation is incomprehensible to the self-seeking life. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to the selfish man. The Sermon on the Mount is meaningless to the so-called practical man of the world—who is in reality the most short-sighted and impracticable of all fools. Right-doing is the only sure road to right-thinking. The fruit of knowledge unmixed with evil grows on the tree of obedience. A clear vision belongs only to righteousness. The first step towards being guided into all truth is self-surrender to the Spirit of truth. We may see and explore the universe of truth only by moving out from under the dominion of selfishness. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of knowledge

and righteousness. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, who is the type of trustful obedience, shall in no wise enter therein. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, in which the proud and the wise in their own eyes have no part. Jesus lifted up his eyes in thanksgiving that the truth hidden from the great and wise and prudent was revealed unto babes in worldly knowledge. None but the spiritually minded can intelligently examine spiritual facts. The anointing from the Holy One, by which we may know the truth direct from God, comes alone upon the waiting and self-surrendered disciples. They who stand willing and ready to do God's will, whatever it may be, however it thwarts all selfish hopes and cuts across all previous conceptions of truth and duty, be the cost of doing however great,—these only can bear the revelations of God's will and be guided in the truth, and be shown the things to come. This is the divine method of human culture.

It has been a slow method, I know, and fraught with pain, while the cry for God to lay bare his holy arm and make all things new has ever gone up—

“From the spirits on earth that adore,
From the souls that entreat and implore
In the fervor and passion of prayer,
From the hearts that are broken with losses,
And weary with dragging of crosses
Too heavy for mortals to bear.”

But the slowness has been in man and not in God. The sorrow of delay and the burden of human need have weighed more heavily upon God than ever upon man. Surely he hath borne our griefs and in all our afflictions he is afflicted. Not in the will of God, but in the self-will of man, is the answer to the cry, How long, O Lord, how long must the prayers and sacrifices of thy saints await the day of their prevailing! It is the blindness of man which cannot bear the light, and not the will of God which withholds its rays of truth from shining. Before each soul, each age, each nation, God raises the highest moral standard possible of achievement. Through many vile centuries God waited for the birth and growth of a tribe unto whom he could deliver the Ten Commandments. And in order to preserve and scatter them as the seed of better fruit to come God patiently tolerated, and wisely encouraged, the most detestable bigotry and prejudice. Then fifteen centuries more

of war and blood, idolatry and woe, passed over the earth before there was born upon it One of whom he could say, "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him." But that Son, with all the truth of God's great universe as the light of his countenance, sweeping aside the traditions of men and transcending the authority of Moses, pouring the blood of God into the fields of human endeavor that the precious seed of love might take root and fruit in a regenerated society, putting a new earth of brotherhood beneath the feet of men and spreading a sky of hope above their heads, himself a fountain of exhaustless life where whoever will may freely drink—he, the life-giving Son of God, was worth all he cost to God or man. With him was manifested the authority of love, and the freedom of faith to learn the truth direct from God under the leadership of the Spirit. From his face shone the grace that shall evermore effulgent grow, until the last shade of the night of sin fades from the horizon of man's spiritual vision. The Son of Man brought immortality to light, only a dream of philosophers and a troubled hope of prophets before his day, and revealed

the life of man as an eternal development, an unending growth in the knowledge of God. The God whom Moses knew as law spake in Christ as love, and the God whom Elijah served as King of Israel Jesus made known as the Father of man. He showed that the present must not be the slave of the past but the past the servant of the present. He revealed revelation itself as an eternally increasing flood of light, a continually enlarging vision of God, and not a stagnant pool of traditionalism. Christ made human life a divine expectancy, a constant looking forward for better things to come, a continuous re-surrender to the Spirit of truth, that each to-morrow might look upon larger revelations of truth and sublimer opportunities for service than to-day could bear to see. The best, which is ever the costliest, is always to come.

The Son of Man himself grew in wisdom and learned obedience through this divine method of spiritual development. The early calls to his Father's work were answered by faith, plans unveiling themselves before the advance of duty, truth coming forth to greet obedience, the cross growing nearer as the

life was made ready to be offered. Though the shadow of the cross rested upon the peaceful village home, whispering sad presentiments of Calvary, yet many things too great for his mortal endurance, during the quiet years of preparation at Nazareth, were revealed to Jesus as he followed the Spirit of truth from the wilderness of temptation along the path of obedience to his Father's will.

So the Spirit of truth, who was the light and power of Jesus' self-emptied soul, enlightens and empowers all the sons of God according to the measure of their self-renunciation. No man who does a good work knows altogether how it is to be done when he begins. The builders of righteousness build at greater cost, though more wisely, than they know when the call to work is first obeyed. God sees how much greater is the life of man than man himself knows. There are deeds of sacrifice to be done, brave words to be spoken, disappointments to be endured, the sorrow of failures to be borne, from which the faith of the strongest love for God and man would turn if the vision of duty were not a growth, and the revelations of truth made

one by one, and the path of toil pointed out step by step. In every way of duty in which God sets the feet of men, in every noble work, whether wrought out unseen or done before the eyes of the world, there are many things to be met, many truths to be learned through suffering, that the doer could not bear to know save in submissive waiting upon the Spirit of truth. The price of being the servant of one's brothers for righteousness' sake, the vocation to which many are called but few are chosen, is always a cross. Wherever a John Baptist appears calling men to repentance there waits a Herod with his sword. Whenever a Savonarola arises to herald the breaking light of a new day of God, somewhere in the lurking shadows the jealous demons of the night are gathering fagots for a new martyr-fire. If Cromwell, iron-faithed as he was, could have seen the immediate end of the Puritan revolution, the sword of God would have fallen from his stricken hand. If the soldiers who marched through the American civil war in defense of the Union could have seen that, a generation after their battles were done, the race question would be one of the most peril-

ous and neglected problems of American statesmanship, and that some of the most piteous appeals on the part of the weak to the strong in all history would then be made by the black man of the south to the white man of the north, I question if the revelation would not have turned them homeward. The Christian youth, aflush with holy fervor, wrathful at the wrongs and hypocrisies of his age, the arms of his endeavors reaching about the throne of God, knows not that the golden days of justice which hope paints on the mystic walls wherein God holds communion with his soul will dawn above the victorious cross of his Christ only after many diviner faiths than his arise to bear the cross to its consummation. The young missionary, aflame with a divine enthusiasm for souls sitting in darkness, sees not that the search for his unknown grave must be the highway over which the gospel will march to the conquest of the heathen nations. The young mother, proudly folding her first-born babe upon her joyful breast, understands not yet that the birth of every child into this sinful world is the birth of a parent's undying heart-ache. Young disciples

of the Lord, under the impulse of high ambition, declaring their willingness to drink of their Lord's cup, know not the wine of anguish for which they ask, nor the bitterness of its dregs. Fresh pilgrims to the celestial city see not the gruesome valleys of dragons and devils to be met in mortal combat on the way. Young lovers know not that love thrives alone on sacrifice, without which it withers away, a lifeless thing, its glory a forgotten dream. And so at every stage of human experience, in every epoch of human history, in every triumph and defeat, in every joy and disappointment, the Spirit of truth stands treasuring many things unsaid, waiting till obedient souls are submissive to know the truth, and pure enough to see the purposes of God unfold. I have many things to say unto you, so speaks the living Christ to all, but ye cannot bear them now, while selfish plans deceive you, and the power of disappointment enthralls you, and the night of hopelessness comes on. But when the Spirit of truth comes into your life to rule, making you his humble learner, possessing your thoughts and directing your deeds, then you shall know the truth

about your experiences, about your questions, about what work you ought to do, about what sacrifices God would have you make, about the needs and problems of your day. As fast as you are ready to act you shall know. As fast as you are ready to be offered will the cross of self-denial be made glorious as well as grievous.

For the things you cannot bear to hear are full of joy as well as pain. God always provides some better, vaster issue of our hopes and toils than the illusions we chase. The fulfillments of God transcend the holiest dreams of man. There is not room in earth's to-day for the blessings of the heavenly to-morrow. John Baptist knows now that Herod's sword was but cleaving the way of the Lord. Savonarola lives, and his spirit, which is the Spirit of truth, spake not alone in Luther and Zwingli, but will speak in braver days to be, when other prophets will arise to behold the city of righteousness coming down out of heaven from God, not to abide alone at Florence, but to enclose the earth with its walls of peace. Cromwell now, his own ambitions washed in the blood of the Lamb, may behold

the Puritan spirit purified building silently and secure the walls of the kingdom of God upon the earth. The soldiers of the civil war who have been marshaled in the invisible ranks of the conquering Christ foresee universal issues, and a glorious mission waiting a despised race, which they saw not, nor were able to comprehend, a generation gone. The impetuous consecration of the youth gained its power in the school of baffled effort. The young missionary took his place among the white-robed throngs who enter the glory of the slain and suffering Christ through great tribulation, to learn that the sacrifice of precious human lives is the seed of God which is fruiting the earth with righteousness and joy so abundant that briers and thorns shall in due time have no ground in which to grow. The mother's heart-ache became her bond of sympathy and fellowship with her Father in heaven. Young love, in proving true and brave, found its divinest rapture in the sorrow from which it shrank. Through trial faith learned that all things work together for good to those who love God.

The Christian life is a continuous revela-

tion of truth, unfolding before a continuous revolution of conduct. And some of the transforming experiences of life cannot be understood until they are patiently and painfully undergone, their meanings being discerned only in the light of long years of retrospect. We know that certain things and certain persons make great changes in all our thoughts and plans of life, but to what end we do not see until the end suddenly appears in new and unexpected work—work we take up gladly when it comes, not knowing, perhaps, till long after it has been begun, that it was the end for which our life was made anew through sore perplexity, or mystery, or disappointment, or fellowship with another, or suffering. We could not have borne, at the beginning, to see the way in which we were being led. But Christ our Lord knew that the mission we once would have refused, the work we would have declined or evaded, would be the music of our souls after he led us to our duty by the Spirit of truth through ways we could not see. The things we cannot bear to know, the work we cannot bear to undertake, the truths we cannot bear to hear and speak, the

self-abandoned life of devotion we cannot bear to live, are welcomed as gifts of joy from the hand of God when we put ourselves under the leadership of the Spirit of truth, willing to hear whatever God may speak, willing to do whatever his Son commands. Then our surrender is unconditional, and no burden is too great to bear, no sacrifice too great to make, nothing too good for hope or too high for effort. Each new step of life is quickly and bravely taken in the faith that future steps, and ways and means of doing, will be made plain when we are prepared for the revelation. And before the eye of faith—for faith is the truest sight—boundless vistas of life are opened, and the universe is seen to be alive with God. The kingdom of truth surrenders, we find, to obedience. And as we follow the Spirit of truth into his limitless realm of knowledge we learn that vast and joyous revelations of the things of Christ, things which eye cannot yet see, nor ear hear, are treasured up in the heart of God for the loving and believing. So we grow perennially hopeful as we walk the way of the cross, our hearts aglow with a divine expectancy and full of the yearning love of

Christ for our unseeing and discouraged brothers.

There is more vital power in the truth as it is in Jesus than either the church or the world believes. The influence of the living Christ, the power of his love, is greater than the world's sight or the church's faith. Sometimes it seems to me that in these days the heavens are bursting with pent-up revelations, soon to flood the earth with living light, and manifest the redemptive power of the gospel of Christ in a regenerated human society. The truth of Jesus is already beginning to clasp the hands and link the hearts of nations, putting humanity in the place of a selfish nationalism, showing that the race is a unit and that the interests of one is the responsibility of all and the interest of all the responsibility of each, making men better than their political and sectarian creeds, moving America to fulfill her divine vocation in speeding cargoes of wheat to starving Russia rather than rejoice in a material prosperity that impoverishes the homes and ruins the industries of Europe. The nations shall yet walk in the light of Christ's throne; and unto him shall the gathering of the peoples be, confederate in the im-

mutable law of love, rejoicing in the peace of the everlasting gospel.

The possibilities of our humanity, in the fellowship of man with God, in the power of brotherhood, in the fruitfulness of sacrifice, in the influence of mind over matter, and the power of soul over soul, all manifested in Christ, are things that yet await the revelation of the Spirit of truth. But the number ready to obey the truth is increasing, and the faith of man in the redemptive work of the living Christ is broadening, and a new Pentecost is preparing to quicken the life of the world with a new energy. And the mission God gives us each is that of making men ready to bear the divine light that is breaking in upon the present from the future by making our Christianity fresh and vivid, real and hopeful. Our part is to renew the springs of our own life through personal contact with Christ, that we may fill the earth with a new and living hope, uplifting the faith of men with a great vision of a divine future, when God shall make all things new, dwelling with us in the power of his Christ, whose Spirit of truth shall be the spirit of a redeemed and glorified humanity.



IV

A Lesson in Education from the Incarnation

Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with a towel wherewith he was girded. So he cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and saith unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith unto him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit. And ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: And ye say well, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, a servant is not greater than his Lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him.

—*John the Apostle.*

IV

A Lesson in Education from the Incarnation

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.—*John i: 14.*

You know how difficult it is, how well-nigh impossible, to put your highest thoughts and holiest feelings into words. You have never been satisfied with any expression of your truest self that you were able to give. You are sure there is more of you than your friends see; more than you know how to reveal; more than you yourself understand. Away in the deeps of your being are halls of divine communion and chambers of thought which you have never dared explore, nor invite a friend to enter. You have deathless hopes that know no language. Your divinest spiritual yearnings are speechless, even unto God. Within you is the unresting strife of moral possibilities, which lack both courage and power to assert

themselves in the face of the world. You are a stranger to yourself. Your ideal self, the self you would be, the self your hidden aspirations enfold and cherish, seems only a mockery to your real self—the self you would not be, the self the world sees. You are sure your ideal self, notwithstanding your failure and folly, is your real self.

If you could lay hands on that ideal, and show it to your friends, you feel they would see you as you are. You will not believe that the self the world sees, and would force you to accept as your moral portion, is your real being. And though inability to utter your potential life sometimes fills you with a sad un-resting silence, you are never content with the self-repression of these voiceless struggles of your soul.

“Often in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life.”

Now your own experience of sorrow and delay, suffering and sacrifice, will help you to some understanding of the sorrow and sacrifice through which God reached the perfect expression of himself in Christ. I do not

mean that you can compass with your finite thoughts all the truth of the incarnation. I would not have you try to imprison eternal facts in temporal and variable forms of speech. I do not want you to think that the eternally unfolding life of God is something you can anatomize and label, and your mind have done with. The incarnation is a subject for exhaustless study. No one age will be, or ought to be, satisfied with what the preceding age has learned about the Word becoming flesh. You have no right, as a trustful and loyal disciple of Christ, to ever rest wholly content with yesterday's knowledge of Christ. From the revelation of God in Christ you should never take eyes of reverent inquiry. In no way can you so belittle Christ, so surely petrify your faith, as by formulating the truth you have already attained to as if it were the whole truth. Paul and John were always disciples—that is, learners. The knowledge of the past was to them the foundation for future knowledge. The joy of learning what they yet knew not, as well as an unwavering confidence in the truth they knew, was their quenchless inspiration to prayer and toil.

I should be sorry indeed to have the time come when you felt you could fence in the eternal Word of God with little words of your own. Great spiritual facts are always cramped in words. You read the utterances of prophetic souls, and you see that the words they use to utter their messages seem stretched and bleeding, crowded with meaning beyond their capacity to contain, leaping for joy in the presence of hearts pure enough to read the spirit within the letter.

Words at best are mysteries. They bear, as you trace back their history, the marks of heroic struggles. There are single words in whose primal meaning you may feel the divine impulses attending the birth of a great revolution. Saxon words are histories of tremendous moral convictions. Latin words reveal the essential inhumanity of Roman thought and aspirations. Greek words are dramas in themselves. Words have all, sometime, been wrenched from the inmost life of man by the necessity of making himself understood; they are the outgrowth of moral achievement. Every new discovery of natural law, every new revelation of divine truth, compels the

creation of new and greater words. The use of language is a moral more than an intellectual attainment. A man's language is always a moral self-revelation, whether he wills it so or not. Sooner or later a man's words bear the stamp of his character. Be he low-born or high, ignorant or possessing all knowledge, the words of a man will bring forth the moral cargo his soul carries, to enrich or impoverish the world. Coddle and sculpture them as we will, our words are sure to lay bare our moral quality before we get done with them; they simply will not, they cannot, long be hypocrites for us. Many words have fallen from grace, and dishonored their divine ancestry; but they proceeded from the mouth of God before they were spoken by the mouth of man. All our human words began in God, and are fragments of the eternal Word that became flesh.

When we think of words as the product of moral necessity, born through the union of the spirit of man with the Spirit of God, we do not wonder that the ancients regarded them with superstitious awe, and finally came to think of them as demons—supernatural be-

ings mediating between the gods and men. The Word, or words, of God came to be the mediums through whom God made himself known. The Word of God was, at John's time, a common term of philosophy in Alexandria and the Greek cities. Plato had taught that God would have nothing to do with men by direct intercourse; he would communicate with men only through intermediary beings—thus beginning that theology which regards the world and they that dwell therein as totally depraved, the offspring of devilish ingenuity rather than divine love. Then the Word of God was a familiar term with the Jews, in both the Old Testament and apocryphal literature. No man had seen God at any time. Yet God had talked with Abraham and Moses, with the leaders and prophets of Israel, with all who would hear his voice. The Word of God was God's will going forth and expressing itself in creation, in the direction and reformation of man, in the process of history. Men had longed to see God in some comprehensible form. This was Job's plaintive desire. This longing, wrongly directed, had given idolatry to the nations. But it was only

by his Word that God could, or had, made himself known. So Philo, the Greek-Jewish philosopher, with others before and after him, had invested the Word of God spoken to the Jews with the personality of the Greek demons, and thus sought to unify Moses and the prophets with Plato and the philosophers. Philo's philosophy grew out of the desire to make God comprehensible to the intellect. The Word of God, whether one or many, came to be the term of both Jews and Greeks, of religion and philosophy, for God in the process of self-revelation. The Word of God was the self-expression of God, God speaking his mind, God acting out his will. The Word was God as certainly as the sun's rays are the sun; as truly as your words in their last analysis, are you.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, in the full glory of the Father's grace and truth. John the fisherman, the practical mystic, the most inspired of sacred writers, grasps these delayed hopes and disappointed yearnings of Israel and Greece, and the divine searchings of the ancient world, and fixes them upon Christ. Here was God within

the compass of human understanding. Here was God perfectly manifested. Here was a complete expression of God's character; an absolute revelation of what God eternally is. Here was God speaking his mind to man in a way that could not be misunderstood. Here was God's heart laid bare to the gaze of his children. The Word speaks God's moral quality, revealing the glory of his love and the fullness of his grace and truth. Here, thought John, is what the ages have been searching and praying for: the Word of God made flesh; God manifested in human character. What was there in the character of Christ that could not satisfy all men as a revelation of God? Was not this Christ the desire of all nations, all philosophies, all religions? What more could man want to win his affection and confidence than the revelation of God in Christ? What excuse could a man have for abiding in unrighteousness after the Word of such a Father had spoken in such a Son?

By the Word becoming flesh, then, I understand John to mean that Christ was a complete self-expression of God. And the Eternal Word had never been silent. The Word was

with God in the beginning, going forth in creation and redemption. God's love for man is eternally what Christ reveals it to be, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. Christ was not an after-thought of God. He was what God had in mind from the first. The creative purpose of God was to make man a complete revelation of himself. Christ was the ideal which God started out with; the ideal which Adam, by self-assertion, failed to realize; the ideal to which God clung through all the weary centuries of man's ingratitude and shame. Though the Word long sought in vain a perfect human habitation, the Father would not suffer human inappreciation and wickedness to repress his love for his offspring. God was able to delight in Abraham and David; to find some measure of satisfaction in Moses and Elijah; to get very near to Isaiah and Daniel. But before Christ the divinest and most obedient of men had been but fragments of the Word; while the great multitudes were blind and indifferent to God's yearnings for human fellowship, and deaf to his warnings of death as the result of disobedience. Man disfellowshipped God; God did not disfellow-

ship man. Man shut God out of his society; God never withdrew from man. Man turned the Word of God out of doors; but the Word kept on speaking to men's souls, and knocking at the door of men's hearts. The race willfully misunderstood God's holiest expressions of his deepest life, and mocked and resisted the mightiest entreaties of his love; but God surrendered not his purpose; he would not give up his ideal. Rather than desert man, rather than fail or be discouraged in making man a perfect expression of himself, rather than leave man without his companionship, God took upon himself all the consequences of human sin; he made the guilt of man his own suffering; he entered into fellowship with man's deepest woes, and made man's wrecked and prostitute life his own shame. Though his own received him not, he came to them as a Redeemer; though human darkness apprehended it not, the divine light shone in upon it. Though man pierced the Father's heart, and trampled upon his outpoured life, and reviled his holiest words, and crucified his ideal, God yet unveiled to man his inmost being. Though sin had long

delayed the divine consummation, and made it necessary for God to reveal himself in the agony of Gethsemane and the sorrow of Calvary, God made a complete revelation of himself in the face of human mockery; God completely expressed all there was of himself in Jesus Christ, who was the best that God could be and do for man, in whom all things in heaven and on earth are summed up, through whom every spiritual blessing in the heavens is poured out upon an undeserving world. God was so unselfish, cared so little for his own glory as a self-possession, so loved the unloving world, that he gave his only begotten Son; he brought out the best there was of him and made a gift of it to those who would scorn the gift; he would not suffer sin to forever repress his infinite thoughts concerning man. In spite of human sin the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And in the glory and truth of that Word we are finding our way home to God. Man's unbelief and faithlessness could not extinguish God's eternal hope. Man's inappreciation and ingratitude could not repress God's inmost life. It would have been a sort of infinite atheism

on God's part, an unbelief in himself, a surrender of faith in the omnipotence and finality of goodness, to have withheld the Word from becoming flesh. Being our Father, having made man in his own image, the Father could do no less than make himself known in his true character to his children. Nothing else than a complete self-expression within the compass of man's understanding, and in the terms of man's experience, no matter what man's condition might be, was consistent with the goodness of God, or could justify his creation of man. With what a strange, infinite joy, then, was God able to speak through the clouds of human misunderstanding at last, and say to the world, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Sin had delayed the joyous event; but the amazing love of God had brought it about in spite of our sin, making the cross of his unspared Son the glorious revelation and pledge of his love and mercy towards man.

The revelation of God in Christ is our obligation to reveal and give the best of our life and thought to the world. The gift of Christ leaves us no choice but to receive his grace

and show it to men as the light in which they are to walk. Every vision of truth is a call to duty; all knowledge is responsibility; the purpose of all God's revelations is to make us like himself. And this complete self-expression of God in Christ should mean nothing less to you and to me than absolute consecration to the work of revealing God to men. As the Father sent the Son so the Son sends us to be divine incarnations and revelations. Since God gave his best to man the best there is in each of us is the moral property of the race. Our richest and sacredest experiences are God's investment in humanity. A religion that goes not beyond the saving of one's own soul, an education that has for its purpose only the selfish development of one's own life, is essential infidelity. It is, as Lotze says, only a shining vice.

To fulfill the divine obligation the revelation of God in Christ lays upon us, we must give ourselves to God. We must let God have his way with us; speak his thoughts in us; do his deeds through us; let God's Word dwell in our flesh, so that everything we do, in work or play, in public or private, shall be

a communion with God. Property and study, eating and drinking, are forms of communion with God; and when otherwise regarded they are perversions of divine trusts. We must seek to enter, and must enter, if we are obedient to the heavenly revelation, that sphere of life where all that we do shall be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the glory of God and salvation of men; where we shall follow our divinest instincts, without asking to see where they will lead us; where we shall live for what God lives, and do the work we see him doing.

Then we shall reveal to men all the truth and grace God gives us. We shall offer the flesh and blood of our souls to be the meat and drink of the world. We are faithless to God's revelation and gift of himself in Christ if we repress the revelation of our holiest impulses, of our most precious experiences and divinest ideals, in the face of human stupidity, scorn and ridicule. This is the divine purpose of devotion and education—*this is education*—the drawing out and giving to the world the best there is in the soul of man. Education is the unfolding and outgiving of the life, at any

temporal cost. I know much that used to be called education was in reality a shutting in rather than a leading out of the deepest life; an attempt to get something into a man rather than call something out of him; an effort to improve upon what God had already made rather than bring it to light for the world's good and God's glory. But we are learning that life is the true object of all teaching and preaching, all praying and revealing. Any sort of spiritual life is better than death. Gushing sophomorphism is infinitely more hopeful than petrified intellectualism and religious mummyism. And he who slams the door of a soul in the face of its crude and awkward originality is one of the devil's servants; but he is not one of God's workmen.

As the redeemed children of God, as the heirs of Christ's grace and truth, we have no right to repress, much less distrust, our holiest feelings; our visions of moral beauty; our noblest ideals of duty and truth. Thoughts exist for the sake of deeds. They are the best we have to give to the world. God has a right to use them as moral material to work into the new earth he is making. The self-

repression of that which is deepest within us, whether at the bidding of our intellectual and religious superiors, or from distrust of the practicability of our ideals, is a kind of atheism. To shrink from unveiling our purest and most loving selves, because of the scoffing skepticism and shameless selfishness of the world, is in itself a refined unbelief and subtle selfishness. There is a moral cowardice in our concealment of the spiritual deeps of our beings through disgust at the baseness of the real life we see about us. We whose fallen lives have been high-lifted by Christ's pierced hands; we who have looked into the face of truth that was spit upon; we whose foul hearts have been cleansed by the mercy that flowed in the blood of Golgotha; we who have watched the Lord Christ bear upon his scourged back the cross of our shame;—what infidels are we to repress and turn into darkness the light that struggles to shine, even dimly, from our poor lives!

Grow, my dear friend, at any cost. Let your deepest thought leap into boldest action. Be willing to blunder and stumble times without number; but do not dare to disobey the

Word that speaks in your flesh. Fear not failure and ridicule; but fear to be false to your divine instincts, your noblest impulses. God is not dumb. Revelation is not something that belongs alone to the past. God is not helpless before human inquiry. You are his child. The anointing you have received from Christ abideth in you. And if you abide in him, and let his words abide in you, then the living Christ will take up his abode in you, and show you the truth and lead you to the Father. Then God will come down and dwell in your life, and walk the earth with your feet; and your brains will throb with God's great thoughts; and your weakness will work with the energy that is omnipotent; and men will believe in God because they see him living and working in you.

There are messages of truth, I would like to say to each one of you, which no one else can carry to needy souls as well as yourself. There are waste places which you only can redeem with goodness; deserts of bodily and spiritual want for each of you to sow with timely words and kindly deeds that they may blossom and fruit with righteousness; wilder-

nesses of wandering pilgrims whom you alone can safest homeward guide. There are spheres of holy influences of which you alone can be the radiating center. There are affections which none but you may lift from things on earth to things in Christ. There are starving souls which you only may feed; blind eyes which no one else may open; troubled lives which you alone may rest; stubborn wills which no other touch than yours may bend to God. You are each sent, as Christ was sent, to so love the lost sheep of God that you will lay down the selfish life and live the divine life for their salvation. Live in and for yourself, and your life will consume itself; go out of yourself into the impoverished souls within your reach, and God will make your life the wealth of the world, and break your sacrifices as bread and meat unto a hungry generation; he will set before you the joy of Christ, and purify your spirit with the fire that will make your life a revelation of his glory to those who sit in the darkness of selfishness.

You have no right to tarry from casting in your lot with Christ because of intellectual difficulties. It is not your opinions God wants,

but your life. You may not be able to satisfy your intellect about the relations of the Father to the Son—though they are simpler than theology would have us think. But when you enter the moral realm all difficulties vanish. If you find in Christ such a revelation of God's character as satisfies you, then why turn to the distractions of human opinion? If you see in Christ the man you would like to be, then follow him; your path of duty is clear. If you are honest you will follow the best you know. Take your stand at Christ's side, and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. And by and by, when you have passed from these wintry skies into the unending summer of his presence, when God's moral processes have done their work, you will be where Christ is, there—

“The Christ of God to find,
In the humblest of thy kind.”



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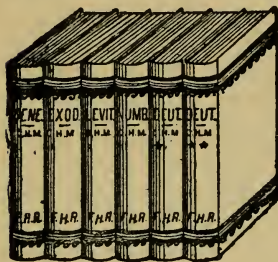
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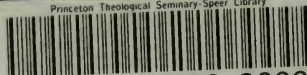
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